CLAIMS

1   1. An entitlement system for vendor services to be provided by a
2   vendor to customers, said services having respective entitlement-
3   verification rules, said entitlement system comprising:
4   an entitlement registry to which each of said services registers so
5   that said registry associates a respective entitlement-verification
6   ruleset with each of said services, said registry associating a first
7   entitlement-verification ruleset with a first service; and
8   a verification function for receiving entitlement requests from
9   said services and for returning entitlement-verification results to
10 said services, said verification function returning to said first
11 service a first entitlement-verification result in response to a first
12 entitlement request from said first service, said first entitlement-
13 verification result being a function of said first entitlement-
14 verification ruleset.

1   2. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 1 further
2   comprising an entitlement-reconciliation function for executing
3   reconciliation procedures yielding entitlement-reconciliation results
4   in response negative entitlement-verification results.

1   3. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 2 wherein a first
2   entitlement-reconciliation result is achieved by executing a first
3   entitlement-reconciliation procedure associated in said registry with
4   said first service.

1   4. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 3 wherein said
2   reconciliation function, in executing said first reconciliation
3   procedure, sends an asynchronous notice to a first customer of an
4   opportunity for entitlement reconciliation.

1   5.   An entitlement system as recited in Claim 4 wherein said
2   reconciliation function establishes a reconciliation website to which
3   said first customer is directed by said notice, said reconciliation
4   website embodying a process through which said first customer can
5   become entitled to said first service.

1   6.   An entitlement system as recited in Claim 2 further
2   comprising a reconciliation database, said entitlement-reconciliation
3   function storing said first entitlement-reconciliation request in said
4   reconciliation database while said reconciliation function
5   implements said first entitlement-reconciliation procedure.

1   7.   An entitlement system as recited in Claim 6 wherein said
2   entitlement-reconciliation function communicates synchronously
3   with said customer without an intervening asynchronous notice in
4   response to a failed second entitlement-verification result from a
5   second entitlement request by a second service of said vendor
6   services.

1   8.   An entitlement system as recited in Claim 2 further
2   comprising a firewall, said entitlement-verification function and said
3   entitlement-reconciliation function residing on opposite sides of
4   said firewall.

1   9.   An entitlement system as recited in Claim 1 wherein said
2   registry also stores communications instructions for respective
3   services specifying how respective entitlement-verification results
4   are to be returned to said respective services.

1   10. A method comprising:

2   receiving a first service request for service to first customer,

3   in response to said first service request, making a first

4   entitlement request;

5   in response to said first entitlement request determining whether

6   or not a first entitlement-verification result is a fail;

7   in the event said first entitlement-verification result is not a fail,

8   performing said service for said customer;

9   in the event said first entitlement result is a fail, making a first

10   entitlement reconciliation request;

11   in response to said first entitlement-reconciliation request,

12   asynchronously notifying said first customer of a first entitlement-

13   reconciliation process that leads to reconciliation when executed by

14   said first customer; and

15   in the event that said customer executes said first entitlement-

16   reconciliation process, performing said service for said customer

17   without requiring resubmission of said first service request.

1   11. A method as recited in Claim 9 wherein said making said

2   first entitlement reconciliation request involves transferring said

3   reconciliation request through a firewall.

1   12. A method as recited in Claim 10 wherein said first

2   entitlement result is determined by retrieving account information

3   associated with said first customer and applying a first entitlement

4   ruleset associated with said first service to said information.

1   13. A method as recited in Claim 12 further comprising

2   registering said first service so that said first reconciliation

3   procedure and said first verification ruleset are associated with an

4   identifier for said first service.

1   14. A method as recited in Claim 10 further comprising:

2   receiving a second service request for a second service of said

3   vendor for a second customer;

4   in response to said second service request, making a second

5   entitlement request;

6   in response to said second entitlement request, determining

7   whether or not a second entitlement-verification result is a fail;

8   in the event said entitlement-verification result is a fail, making a

9   second entitlement reconciliation request; and

10   in response to said second entitlement-reconciliation request,

11   presenting said second customer with a second process for

12   reconciling entitlement synchronously without asynchronous

13   notification.

1   15. A method as recited in Claim 14 further comprising

2   registering said first and second services so that said first

3   entitlement-reconciliation procedure is associated with an identifier

4   for said first service and so that a second entitlement-reconciliation

5   procedure specifying said second entitlement-reconciliation process

6   is associated with an identifier for said second service.

1   16.   A computer program set on computer-readable media, said
2   computer program set comprising:
3   an entitlement registry for registering vendor services along with
4   respective entitlement verification rulesets; and
5   an entitlement-verification function for providing entitlement
6   results in respective to respective entitlement requests by vendor
7   services in response to customer requests for those services, said
8   entitlement results being generated by applying respective
9   entitlement rulesets for the services making said entitlement
10   requests to account information gathered in response to said
11   entitlement requests.

1   17.   A computer program set as recited in Claim 16 wherein said
2   an entitlement-verification ruleset applied by said verification
3   function in response to a first entitlement request by a first vendor
4   service is distinct from a second entitlement-verification ruleset
5   applied by said entitlement-verification function in response to a
6   second entitlement request by a second vendor service.

1   18.   A computer program set as recited in Claim 16 further
2   comprising an entitlement-reconciliation function for providing a
3   customer a synchronous entitlement-reconciliation process when
4   the result of an entitlement request is negative.

1   19.   A computer program set as recited in Claim 18 wherein said
2   entitlement reconciliation function provides for notifying said
3   customer of said process synchronously.

1   20.   A computer program set as recited in Claim 18 wherein
2   entitlement reconciliation function provides for notifying said
3   customer of said process asynchronously.